

ADS Dahlia University – Understanding ADS Classification Numbers

ADS (registered) dahlias are assigned a 4-digit classification number, depending on their **size, form** and **color**. The formula used for assigning the numbers may seem a little complicated at first, but once you have a good overview of how it is done, it becomes a great tool for helping growers to identify their cultivars. The classification number is used when exhibiting in shows. It is also used in documentation, and by sellers.

For classification purposes, there are **TWO** distinct groups of dahlias.

In the first group of dahlias, each form is classified according to one of five different sizes. This gives us the first digit of the classification number:

| SIZE | NUMBER |
|---------------|--------|
| Giant (AA) | 0 |
| Large (A) | 1 |
| Medium (B) | 2 |
| Small (BB) | 3 |
| Miniature (M) | 4 |

These are the six main forms that fall into the size categories above. This gives us the second digit of the classification number:

| FORM | NUMBER |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Formal Decorative (FD) | 0 |
| Informal Decorative (ID) | 1 |
| Semi-Cactus (SC) | 2 |
| Cactus (C) | 3 |
| Incurved Cactus (IC) | 4 |
| Lacinated (LC) | 5 |

These are the fifteen color classes that are used to classify dahlias. This gives us the third and fourth digit of the classification number:

| COLOR | NUMBER |
|------------------|--------|
| White (W) | 01 |
| Yellow (Y) | 02 |
| Orange (OR) | 03 |
| Pink (PK) | 04 |
| Dark Pink (DP) | 05 |
| Red (R) | 06 |
| Dark Red (DR) | 07 |
| Lavender (L) | 08 |
| Purple (PR) | 09 |
| Light Blend (LB) | 10 |
| Bronze (BR) | 11 |
| Flame Blend (FB) | 12 |
| Dark Blend (DB) | 13 |
| Variegated (V) | 14 |
| BiColor (BI) | 15 |

So, for example, an AA-SC Y dahlia would be classified 0202 (size: 0, form 2, color 02); a BB-IC PR dahlia would be classified 3409 (size: 3, form: 4, color: 09) .

Try it yourself: What classification number would you give a B-ID R dahlia? _____ How about a M-FD V dahlia? _____

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

The second group is often referred to as “Other Types”, and there are 14 of these. This gives us the first and second digit of their classification number:

| TYPE | NUMBER |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Ball (BA) <3.5” | 60 |
| MiniBall (MB) 2”-3.5” | 61 |
| Pompon (P) <2” | 62 |
| Stellar (ST) | 70 |
| WaterLily | 73 |
| Novelty Fully Double (NX) | 76 |
| Peony (PE) | 80 |
| Anemone (AN) | 82 |
| Novelty Open Center (NO) | 86 |
| Collarette (CO) | 90 |
| Orchid (O) | 92 |
| Orchette (OT) | 94 |
| Single (S) >2” | 96 |
| Mignon Single (MS) <2” | 97 |

Although the size of some of these dahlias is a factor in their classification, there is only one size class per form. The color classes are the same as for the forms listed above and give us the third and fourth digit of the classification number.

For example, the classification number for a ST W would be 7001 (Stellar # is 70, color white is 01); the classification number for a BA DP would be 6005 (Ball # is 60, color dark-pink is 05).

Try it yourself: What is the classification for an OT Y _____? How about a MS V? _____ (answer at the end of this lesson).

Another lesson will describe what each form looks like and provide a color picture for you to see how this appears.

A great resource for seeing what the different types of ray florets (petals) look like is [Dahlias: A Monthly Guide](#), published by the Puget Sound Dahlia Association, and available in the ADS store.

www.dahlia.org, click on “Store” tab at the top of the home page.

Answers:

B-ID R 2106

M-FD V 4014

OT Y 9402

MS V 9714

Our courses are written by dahlia enthusiasts, not necessarily scientists or horticulturalists. These enthusiasts are pleased to share their experience and best practices with you. Please keep in mind that there are a variety of opinions in the dahlia community and that different solutions and procedures work in different circumstances and locales. We urge you to participate in a [local society](#) where you will meet great growers with knowledge of growing dahlias in your area...and you'll have fun!

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